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TO CIET AND AETA GROUPS

CONCERNING THE POLITICAL LINE OF JILL JOLLIFFE'S BOOK

"EAST TIMOR : NATIONALISM & COLONIALISM" (University of Queensland Press, 1978. Hard cover : $17.95)

I have just read Jill Jolliffe's book. It has importance as the first major study in English of the East Timorese struggle, and I found its strongest point the exposure, in all its gory detail, of the betrayal of the East Timorese people by successive Australian Governments. The book of course only in detail deals with the period up to the invasion, and in one relatively short chapter with the 2½ years since. It was also clearly written before September 1977 and the exposure of Xavier do Amaral. This is not even mentioned in the preface, pointing to the book having been already in the obviously slow process of production as early as September 1977.

However, without taking away from the positive aspects of the book, it is necessary within the Timor movement itself, at least, to open up a discussion on the political line of the book when it comes to treat the political evolution of East Timor.

First two significant quotes:

" I have also endeavoured to answer the question :' what sort of government would an independent East Timor have ?' For this reason the book is largely a history of the development of FRETILIN, as Basil Davidson's history of Angolan nationalism, 'In the Eye of the Storm', is principally the story of the MPLA. It is apparent from the recent history of East Timor that, given political regroupments which may occur between Timorese nationalists of all shades inside or outside East Timor, Fretilin (itself subject to change) would be the major component of the government of an independent East Timor." (Preface)

"UDT and FRETILIN had experienced a constant ebb and flow of common interest; since the invasion discussions have been held between FRETILIN and UDT people outside East Timor towards a new alliance , although at the time of writing they have not borne fruit. The avowed willingness of most of the political associations formed after 25 April ,1974, to now fight alongside FRETILIN epitomises the truth that the force now seeking to assert itself is that of Timorese nationalism, violently arrested in the period of its first ripening, but a force which has expressed itself to varying degrees through all the political groupings. The differences between them were, and are, of a political nature, of the means to achieve a national state and the nature of that state once established." (pages 297 & 298) (ALL EMPHASIS ADDED).

It is the political perspective of the presence of Timorese nationalism in all political groupings ; and the likely "political regroupment" of these forces in a "new alliance" , that distorts the interpretation that flows through the book concerning the political evolution of East Timor. A whitewash of the UDT and even to a lesser extent of APODETI occurs even in dealing with the criminal UDT coup. But to prove that is the subject of a longer review. Let us deal with the political perspective itself.

First, I am sure that Fretilin leaders inside and outside East Timor will be amazed to hear that "discussions have been held between FRETILIN and UDT people outside East Timor towards a new alliance." Fretilin "inside and outside" have insisted a thousand times that Fretilin is the "sole ,legitimate representative" of the East Timorese people. UDT, or strictly speaking ex-UDT because UDT was twice officially dissolved (on August 12 1975 and later in Atambua)., does not exist except in the minds of some refugees in Australia and Portugal. UDT or even ex-UDT does not exist in East Timor. There are some ex-UDT members and leaders who are either collaborators with the Indonesians , or in refugee camps, or have renounced UDT and are fighting as Fretilin supporters ,under Fretilin leadership against the invaders and the traitors. That is not my statement : it has been repeated several times by Alarico Fernandes and the outside leadership. For Fretilin to form an alliance with the rump of the ex-UDT now dreaming in Portugal or Australia would be ridiculous, and would be a betrayal of the Maubere people. The ex-UDT leaders are only concerned with winning back their privileges, their coffee-plantations , their right

to exploit the Maubere people.
These ex-UDT leaders are guilty of grave crimes inside East Timor. The murder of tens of Fretilin militants during their abortive coup attempt; the planning of that coup with the Indonesian Generals and other intelligence services ; collaboration with the Suharto generals until (for some of them) it was clear they were not going to win back the privileges they held ; their continued clandestine contacts with the Indonesians -- and so on.

Of course, the rank-and-file ex-UDT and even ex-APODETI supporters were misled by their leaders : in East Timor they have been welcomed into the struggle against the invaders when they accept the discipline of Fretilin leadership. Similarly, in Australia and Portugal a number of them now are Fretilin supporters.

Fretilin would indeed have to be"subject to(great)change" to even consider such an alliance. Of course, Fretilin may have been "subject to change" on this andmany other questions if the Xavier line had won out in September 1977. Does Jill still hold to her prognosis of such an alliance being not only possible but likely ?

But as we wrote in East Timor News 31 : the rump ex-UDT in Portugal and Australia only has meaning as a "reserve force of imperialism". That is : Suharto has already in fact lost the war begause he cannot win it. This is recognised by some of his closest advisers and increasingly by the Australian and American rulers. To disengage from this war , the Jakarta Generals and imperialism want to install a safe, neo-colonial regime. The ex-UDT leaders in exile ,busily re-establishingtheir credentials, are the guarantee that Suharto and imperialism will demand from Fretilin and the Maubere people for withdrawal -- that is, there must be a coalition government with the Joao Carrascalaos involved. In this scenario, talk of an "autonomous province" , and of an "independent" East Timor in which economic "concessions" would be given to Jakarta and Jakarta and Canberra be appointed big brothers to "watch over" the country, are also part of the pattern emerging. If we can think of how Suharto and imperialism will try to get Indonesian troops out of East Timor, then we can easily see the pattern emerging.

The "force of Timorese nationalism" which is"asserting itself" (an almost idealist concept) xxx did not and does not include the traitors of UDT, APODETI , KOTA and other "groupings". These movements or groupings all betrayed , from the time particularly of the UDT coup attempt. They have forfeited all rights to be considered nationalists.

It is amazing for Jill to write that the only differences "were of a political nature". As though that was a minor factor, and one that can be easily overcome, above all at this late stage. The UDT wanted and its rump still wants, a neo-colonial independence , where they could still exploit,and imperialism could have open season. The UDT-Fretilin "coalition" of January-May 1975 was a conjunctural "non-aggression pact" against Indonesian threats, which never bound Fretilin , and never stopped Fretilin attempting to win the UDT followers to a genuine struggle for liberation.

The struggle is now at a new, much higher stage. The position of the UDT, APODETI and other grouplets is now clear, as never before to the Maubere peopl The struggle reached that stage many years ago. To now dream of returning it to the earlier stage, to somehow in these new conditions,when Fretilin has been leading the Maubere people in an heroic resistance for over two years, with great success, to revive the early 1975 UDT-Fretilin coalition, is political idealism. Unless you have ,of course, another concept, another goal for East Timor than its full and total liberation.

Now more than ever, I believe, the East Timor support movement must assert its slogan of "solidarity with Fretilin" at least within its own ranks,and among its most conscious supporters, and reject any neo-colonial plans for East Timor . --- DENIS FRENEY, SYDNEY, APRIL 26,1978.